



GAMA PROGRAM

Voluntary Domestic Well Assessment Project

- GOALS
- OVERVIEW
- SCOPE
- SAMPLING AND ANALYSIS
- QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

Goals

To assess water quality and susceptibility of groundwater resources, and to provide private well owners with information about private well water quality, the State Water Resources Control Board is launching the Voluntary Domestic Well Assessment Project.

Overview

The Governor, the California Legislature, and citizens are concerned about public supply well closures because of chemicals, such as MTBE from gasoline and various solvents from industrial sources. The SWRCB launched the GAMA Program because of increasing concern with groundwater quality. The GAMA program has two components: the California Aquifer Susceptibility (CAS) Assessment which addresses public supply drinking water wells,

and the Voluntary Domestic Well Assessment Project which addresses private drinking water wells.

There is no statewide program that regulates the water quality of private drinking water wells. As a result, the quality of California's private well water is largely unknown. Other states with private well sampling programs have found constituents, such as MTBE, in private wells.

The Voluntary Domestic Well Assessment Project samples private wells for various constituents found in private well water and provides that information to the private well owners. The Voluntary Domestic Well Assessment Project includes a public education component to help in the understanding of water quality data and water quality issues affecting private water wells.

Scope

Coordinating with local environmental agencies, the Voluntary Domestic Well Assessment Project focuses on specific areas, such as resources permit. The focus areas are chosen based on existing knowledge of water quality and land use.

Sampling & Analysis

SWRCB staff collects samples from private wells then sends samples to a certified laboratory for analysis. Each well is located using Global Positioning System (GPS) receivers. Sampling is conducted to ensure that the sample represents the water being used by the public. Samples are collected at a well access point or from a household water tap. General constituents sampled are shown in Table 1. Other constituents may be chosen based on information about regional hydrogeology or land use. For example, private wells that are near agricultural land may be sampled for pesticides, based on potential water quality impacts. Private wells that are part of

a site investigation or remediation-monitoring program are not sampled as part of the Voluntary Domestic Well Assessment Project.

Table 1. General constituents sampled at private wells.

CONSTITUENTS
Total and Fecal Coliform
General Minerals (e.g. Nitrate, Sodium, Bicarbonate)
Inorganics (e.g. Lead, Arsenic)
Organics (e.g. MTBE, PCE, TCE)

The SWRCB pays for the costs of sampling and analysis, and the results are provided to private well owners as quickly as possible.

Questions And Comments

The SWRCB wants to hear from you about the Voluntary Domestic Well Assessment Project. For more information contact Carol Julian by telephone at (916) 341-5858 or by e-mail at julianc@cwpc.swrcb.ca.gov

For more information on the state's other Clean Water Programs, see our Web site at www.swrcb.ca.gov/cwphome